

claravine

22 Ways to Capture First-Party Data in a Cookieless World

With third-party cookies on the chopping block, first-party data is having its moment. Marketers are prioritizing first-party data, and for good reason. This relatively low-cost solution helps brands get closer to consumers by understanding what they actually think, need, and want versus the spray-and-pray methods of third-party data. Best of all, because the brand owns the relationship with the consumer, it also controls the data, making it unique to the brand and easy to activate. First-party data's application is varied and valuable, from personalization to recommendations to product development. But, even those companies without direct relationships can build first-party data collection strategies — and the time is now. We've compiled 22 ways to start capturing first-party data before (and after) the third-party cookie expires.





1. Site and Mobile App Registration

Consumers log into experiences on the web and their mobile phones every day. They provide keys to their identity in exchange for the value that brand provides. Consider Google, Facebook, Amazon, and Apple – all four require site and mobile app registration. Usually this identification is an email address and password. Yet, many brands that rely on advertising are hesitant to put up a roadblock to the free content consumers love. Savvy brands know that they must provide value for this information and are doing so in the form of a range of incentives. These can include first-time discounts, insider sales, first-to-know content, and much more. Not every visitor to your brand will register so providing some content may be your best bet while incentivizing your core customers and prospects to sign on for greater value.



2. Single Sign-On (SSO)

A similar option to site and mobile app registration is single sign-on or SSO. When a user visits your website or mobile app, they're given the option to sign on with their Google or Facebook account. The upside for the user is a fast and easy way to access great content without the need to create yet another individual password. Brands benefit from this frictionless experience by gaining the user's information such as ID, name, profile URL, address, and interests. Permissions will vary by single sign-on client and that user's privacy settings.



3. Selective Content Locking

B2B brands and publishers know selective content gating well. It's a proven method to gain prospect information in exchange for a white paper, ebook, video, or more. You can also gate certain parts of your website or cap the number of articles that are free to view. News publishers in particular are using selective content locking to help drive subscriptions. High trafficked pages also reveal the value of that content – an important insight for editorial and, in the case of publishers, monetization strategies. Selective content offers you a way to capture name, location, email, interests, profession, and more. Use it wisely as consumers won't give away all this data for nothing. Your content should be well worth the extra consumer lift to access it.



4. Newsletter Signup

For brands with blogs, email newsletters are a way to keep consumers connected to their content. In exchange for a consumer's email address, brands can share special promotions, first looks, private events, values-based messaging, and more via email newsletters. The newsletter can be a gateway to collecting other first-party data as well. In addition to transactional data when consumers buy from your newsletter, offering subscribers a variety of ways to customize the content they're interested in also delivers vital information about consumer interests. Collecting these first-party data signals can help brands inform future promotions and even product development. It's important to monitor open and click rates as well as unsubscribes as this data can reveal important clues about content relevancy, timeliness, and frequency of messages.



5. Progressive Profiling

As the name suggests, progressive profiling isn't a race to collect first-party data, but a marathon. This method rewards consumers with a low bar to enter your site or mobile experience while providing more value each time. Every time a user interacts, you greet them with a short request for data. Remember the goal is to build up the consumer's profile over time and not turn them off to sharing more information



6. Online Site Interactions

How do consumers behave on your properties? Marketing tags can tell you. Capture data on how consumers interact with your brand in a variety of ways. From clicks and views to time spent, location and cart data, this first-party data can tell you not only who visits your site (and where) but what pages and products they're interested in. Use this data to personalize the experience and create more of what your customers want. .



7. Loyalty / Rewards Programs

Consumers want to feel valued by the brands they buy from – or they will leave. Customer loyalty and retention are declining, with two-thirds of consumers saying they'd switch to a competitor with a better customer experience and service. Loyalty and rewards programs are one way to keep your best customers and prospects engaged and committed. Whether through email, text, or mobile app (see #13 QR Codes), you can offer customers a range of perks to keep your brand top of mind. From points programs to spending tiers, limited time offers to free perks, make sure the value matches the exchange of information. Loyalty can tell brands what drives consumer purchases, helping build out personas for prospecting and lookalike targeting. Loyalty can be a treasure trove of first-party data information if brands truly reward consumers with what they want and value.



8. Content Sharing

When consumers find something they love, they want to be among the first to share it. Savvy brands can capitalize on this consumer psychology and win more potential converts with content sharing functionality. Whether it's an article, video, product, or image, sharing is an easy onramp to collecting first-party data about engaged consumers – and prospects. This functionality enables you to collect that visitor's email address AND the individual's connections as well. A real two-fer! That consumer has done the hard work of prospecting for you in essence. When the recipient visits your site, you can collect even more data and win them over with more of your great content and products or keep them warm through email outreach and promotional opportunities.



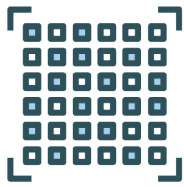
9. Social

It's not an understatement to say consumers spend hours on social media per day. In fact, 50% of time spent on mobile happens on social media apps. In addition to brand building globally, social media can help companies understand who their core customers are, what they like, share, and more. Brands can capture this information on social media as well as hear directly from consumers through comments and direct messages. Plus, brands can learn more about users through their profiles. What other brands do your followers engage with? What kind of information do they share? (See #7 Content Sharing above for more.) This kind of information can inform mutually beneficial partnerships (see #18 Collaborations) and cross-selling (see #19 Co-Registration) opportunities.



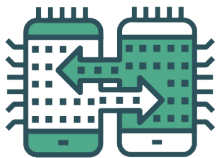
10. Polls and Surveys

If brands really want to know what consumers think, ask them. Polls and surveys are a low cost way to engage consumers on a number of topics related to your brand and even the competition. Think of these activations as focus groups for marketing and product as well as an easy way to collect first-party data. In exchange for answering a few questions, brands can reward consumers with discounts, access to exclusive content or sales, and more.



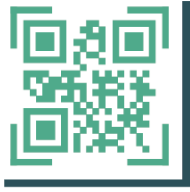
11. Offline Purchases

Brick-and-mortar transactions are often trapped at the point of sale. This siloed data rarely gets integrated into the big picture of a consumer profile. Connect the dots of that purchase by asking for a consumer's email or phone number. One clever way brands can collect this information is by incentivizing consumers to receive paperless receipts or messages when out-of-stock products arrive in store. QR codes are also a valuable tool for capturing offline intent and purchase data (See #13 QR Codes for more). Make sure you can link your offline purchasing behavior to the online instance of that consumer's identity.



12. Online Purchases

Many consumers shopped online for the first time in 2020. Brands reaped the rewards of connecting with these new consumers, and in many cases, new audience demographics. Shopper data tells brands not only what consumers buy, but what products they may buy together, how often they purchase, what price points work best, and where their best customers live. Combine this with your offline purchase data for a complete view of customers. This powerful combination can also reveal what products work best online versus in-store and vice versa, helping you optimize inventory and move products in the right channels. In addition, some consumers will only buy in certain channels so connecting the dots on your purchase behavior can illuminate where products have the best chance of selling.



13. QR Codes

QR codes are back! An estimated 11 million households were forecasted to scan QR codes in the US in 2020, per Statista. With smartphones now able to read QR codes without a special app, this increase in adoption will only rise alongside consumer demand for hands-free, frictionless experiences. QR codes are especially handy for loyalty program identification at the point of sale (POS) and for linking offline purchase intent to a consumer's digital profile. Rather than losing a sale due to an out-of-stock item or the wrong size, tag your product shelves with QR codes. Consumers can scan the code to ask for an alert when the item becomes available in exchange for providing an email or phone number. Not only can brands salvage a lost sale but they'll also win a connection to that prospect.



14. Customizable Products

The consumer is king and queen of commerce. If they can't get what they want, how and when they want, they'll go elsewhere. Giving the consumer a bit of control over the product delivers major brand rewards. Personalization options can tell brands a lot about the personality of their best customers and give valuable product insight to design teams. In addition, customization can tell brands what products pair well together. Frito-Lay's Snacks.com offered consumers the option to create their own snack pack. Traffic soared. The brand learned what consumers really wanted and some surprising pairings emerged. The experiment gave the brand a new way to develop direct relationships with consumers and insight into how to update its inventory and thinking around both retail shelves and ecommerce offerings.



15. Product Registration / Warranty

If you haven't registered a product in a while, it's likely you're not alone. Warranty cards are often trash bound as soon as a consumer opens up a product. But brands are getting savvier about connecting product purchases to consumers they don't have a direct relationship with. QR codes are one method that works well for both consumers and brands. A quick scan of the code on a mobile phone provides the brand a connection to the buyer they might never have. It's also a way to deepen the relationship over time through email or even text.



16. Games

Gamifying first-party data collection is an easy win for brands. Through quick quizzes, calculators, and challenges, brands can gain more than an email address. You'll also benefit from insight into what interactive content piques consumer interests, giving you important behavioral and interest-based data to round out a consumer's profile. This kind of content can also inform personalization and recommendations to engaged consumers.



17. Sweepstakes

Giveaways have grown more sophisticated and trustworthy since the days of Publishers Clearing House. Both D2C and B2B brands can collect valuable first-party data at a low price thanks to sweepstakes. This isn't the time to nickel and dime the prize though — offer something that will draw in consumers. The better the prize, the greater possibility brands can collect more information. Sweepstakes often use a custom landing page with collection fields such as name, email, and address. Brands can use this opportunity to engage consumers further with quizzes or polls to collect more information about behaviors, interests, and shopping behaviors. Offering a daily instant prize at a lower price point can bring even greater traffic to the sweepstakes and increase your first-party data collection's potential.



18. Customer Reviews / Feedback

Whether on social, an owned site, or other channel, customer reviews are a goldmine of information. You can tie these reviews back to your customer base to build out profiles, while mining this data for product updates, marketing promotions, and more. And we all know that customer reviews are one of the key determinants in purchasing decisions so regardless of the first-party data you collect, they're essential.



19. Customer Help Inquiries

Customer service is often a thankless job. Marketers thank your customer service representatives today. Whether over the phone or via email, customer help inquiries can and should be linked to that consumer's profile. These interactions can help update what type of products that consumer has purchased or might be right for in the future. This first-party data can also inform other departments like inventory, engineering, product, and more. If you have a chatbot on your site, don't forget to link this data to the user's profile.



20. Collaborations

Partnering with influencers and even other brands can boost your first-party data collection. A social media celebrity can extend your brand's influence to a wider audience and help you capture those consumers when they convert or subscribe to learn more about your product. Similarly, brand collaborations can introduce your products to hard-to-reach consumers. The Dunkin' - Saucony sneaker collaboration around the Boston Marathon was a perfect pairing. Both brands benefitted from exposure to the other's consumer base and the opportunity to capture transaction and interest data on the overlapping audiences.



21. Co-Registration

Similar to collaborations, co-registration is another tool in a marketer's arsenal to expand first-party data collection. Co-registration involves using another company's newsletter or subscriber information to reach a new audience. Brands should be sure the alignment will make sense to recipients and tailor the messaging to that audience's interest and needs. In exchange, you'll gain awareness among a new demographic and conversions you may not have had otherwise.



22. Events

Connecting with consumers virtually or in person can help brands put a literal face to their customers and prospects. These gatherings also provide ways to collect more personal first-party data such as causes your consumers believe in, brand affinities, interests, and opinions on a variety of topics. In addition to event registration data captured on the front end, brands can collect other data points during the "live" event through polls and surveys or giveaways. And, even those who didn't tune in to the event can be reached through post-event roundups and opportunities to engage with recordings.

First-party data is a brand's most valuable asset. There are a number of ways to build up your resources, no matter if you're a direct to consumer company or not. More data isn't always better, however. Be strategic in crafting your strategy and only collecting what you truly need as every piece of data requires the consumer's consent and trust. To extract the greatest value from your first-party data, consider data integrity standards so whatever you collect can be connected and accessed using the same language across the business.